

CONNECTICUT COUNCIL on  
**PROBLEM  
GAMBLING**

Press Conference Comments  
Mary Drexler, Executive Director  
Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling  
National Problem Gambling Awareness Month  
March 4, 2014

My name is Mary Drexler and I am the Executive Director of the CT Council on Problem Gambling. Before I begin speaking, I want to thank Senator Bartolomeo, who has sponsored this press conference, and Senator Hartley who is co-sponsoring today's event. Both have been very supportive of the CT Council's work.

I would like to applaud Senator Bartolomeo for drafting her recent legislative Bill to ensure illegal sweepstakes cafes are not welcome to operate here in CT. Senator Hartley was also very supportive on these recent efforts.

I am also pleased that Representative Hwang, has also asked to say a few words today at this event. For other legislators who have joined us here, I want to thank you for your presence to help launch National Problem Gambling Awareness Month. One last, but not least, thank you to those in recovery who know first-hand the challenges they are faced with throughout the recovery process as they try to regain control over the devastation incurred as a result of their problem gambling. I also wish to welcome those representing the gaming industry for attending this event. CCPG works very hard with our existing gambling industry to ensure responsible gambling practices and provides training to its employees regarding the risks/warning signs that may indicate a potential for gambling problems for both patrons and employees.

As you see in front of me, this is a banner, celebrating National Problem Gambling Awareness Month. It is being held by 2 of the students who are here today who are part of a peer to peer gambling awareness program at Monroe High School. In previous years, there has only been 1 week officially dedicated by our National Office during the month of March. We are extremely happy that we are now able to declare March as National Problem Gambling Awareness Month. As many of you may know, the CT Council on Problem Gambling was officially incorporated in 1981, but our previous Executive Director, Dr. Marvin Steinberg has been working in the field of problem/pathological gambling for nearly 40 years. Our mission is to reduce the prevalence and impact of problem gambling on individuals, families and the communities across the state.

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Our goal here today is to share with you the activities the Council has planned, to educate all CT residents on the risks of gambling activity and teach those who choose to gamble, how to do so safely; in other words, *how to keep the problem out of gambling*. Although we have a neutral stance on legalized gambling, we do not ignore the potential harm and social impact it has had or may have on individuals and their families here in CT. As a matter of fact, we encourage our state to take a closer look at the social impact of gambling activity and ask they ensure resources, financial and otherwise, are available to meet the needs of those who find themselves struggling with a gambling addiction.

The Council's activities for National Problem Gambling Awareness Month began with a press release sent out last Wednesday to media outlets. We ask that all press include the Council's Helpline number and website in all stories relating to gambling so that those who have developed a gambling problem and those impacted by a problem gambler's behavior know where to go for help. In fact, the Council would appreciate that this is done not only during this month but throughout the year.

For the next 2 weeks the wall in the corridor leading to the LOB cafeteria will be available for viewing to learn more about the CT Council, our mission, and our services. Also, the Council's staff will be busy providing education and awareness about the issue of problem gambling across the state. The events include: activities on some of our CT College campuses; presence at both Mohegan Sun and Foxwoods Resort Casino to educate employees further about this issue so they can not only help patrons but also help themselves or others they know who may have a gambling problem. We will continue our advocacy work here at the LOB to monitor proposed bills relating to gambling activity on behalf of problem gamblers and their families. We will have a presence at the CIAC High School Basketball Tournament, to educate youth, their parents, and others about problem gambling. We will also have trainings at treatment locations. There will be 2 billboards relating to problem gambling awareness month in 2 locations in CT that are a part of a collaborative effort with each of the casinos in our state regarding responsible gambling and how to access help. We also wish to thank the CT State Lottery for their collaboration with the Council in their prevention efforts relating to problem gambling. The CT Lottery will be running PSA's as well as providing messages on electronic Billboards in the state with information on our Helpline so individuals and families know where to call for help. In addition, the CLC has provided inserts to be placed in all state employee paychecks in March with our Helpline number, as well as reaching out to retailers regarding

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problem gambling awareness. We also encourage everyone here to like CCPG on Facebook and follow us on Twitter as we look to more ways to further promote problem gambling awareness.

We are a small office, but a strong presence. I want to thank my staff, all of whom are here today for their hard work and dedication in fulfilling the mission of the CT Council. My final thought is to those who are currently in recovery or who may be a risk for a gambling problem,

“Don’t Give Up, There is hope; Don’t Give in, There is Help. Call our Helpline at 1-888-789-7777 or go to our website at [www.problemgambling.org](http://www.problemgambling.org) to access more information on reaching the Helpline through Chat or text.

Enough said by me. I would like to now introduce Senator Bartomoleo who so graciously offered to sponsor this press conference. Again, her recent bill to prevent illegal sweepstakes cafes here in CT is greatly appreciated. I am honored to introduce Senator Bartolomeo, who in turn will introduce her co-sponsor of this press conference, Senator Hartley.